Parent Education Course Evaluation

Planning Services

Alberta
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PARENT EDUCATION
COURSE EVALUATION

A PARENT EDUCATION COURSE

INTEGRATED INTO THE SCHOOL

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated a parent education course designed for parents of Kindergarten children. Based on an Adlerian model, this course provided information to both parents and teachers and facilitated consultation between home and school.

The evaluation used a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test design, with a control group recruited from a neighboring school system. It assessed parents' reactions to the course, their attitudes toward parenting, and their perceptions of actual and ideal parenting styles. Children's self-concept was assessed individually, and teachers rated the children's behavior in their Kindergarten class.

The course was found to be effective in increasing parents' understanding of and communication with their child. It also increased feelings of trust and the amount of autonomy permitted to the children. There were no gains in children's self-concept nor in teacher's ratings of classroom behaviour.

The course appears to be an effective means of changing parents' attitudes and increasing their parenting self-concept. It is recommended that it be continued and expended to other grade levels. Followup testing is suggested to ascertain whether gains are maintained.

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Invest in Your Child's Future is a parenting course designed for parents of Kindergarten children. Based on Adlerian principles, the program is integrated into the schools, with teacher inservice and parent-teacher conferences in combination with parent classes.

The evaluation of the program focussed on five aspects of possible change:

(a) Parents' attitudes toward parenting.
(b) Parents' self-report of their own behavior and perceptions of ideal parenting.
(c) Parents' reactions to the course itself.
(d) Teachers' ratings of the Kindergarten child's behavior in school, and
(e) Assessments of the child's self-concept.

A control group was selected from the other school system in the city, composed of a sample of parents who indicated that they would like to take this type of course. Both course and control groups were tested before and after the courses were held. (Fall and winter for the first course and control groups; and winter and spring for the second groups.) In addition, there was a delayed post-test given to the fall course and control groups, four months after the course had ended.

Results indicate that the course had some impact on parental attitudes and reported behavior, particularly in areas stressed by the Adlerian program philosophy. There were statistically significant changes in parents' reported understanding of and communication with their children, in their trust in the child and in their feeling that they can have some impact on their children's behavior. Gains in understanding and trust appear to be maintained, at least to some extent, for four months after the end of the course.

Parents also saw some changes in their own behavior, specifically in granting more autonomy to their children to make decisions and in reducing the use of guilt as a means of control. The increase in autonomy was maintained after the course. There was also a decrease in the distance between actual and ideal ratings of behavior, indicating more satisfaction with performance in the parenting role.

Parents reported that they enjoyed the course and its content. On a subjective level, they saw themselves having made gains in knowledge of parenting skills and child development.

There were no significant changes from pre to post test in teachers' ratings of the children's classroom behavior, nor in tested self-concept. In the delayed post-test, there was a tendency for children whose parents' took the course to be rated as less responsive to rules and authority. This is most likely a result of the increased autonomy granted to the children at home. The children may then expect the same freedom of decision-making at school, where it is often inappropriate.

The changes in the attitudes and reported behavior of the parents occur in the areas stressed by the program philosophy. These include encouraging independence and responsibility in children, communication and effective discipline. It is encouraging to see that gains are maintained, at least to some extent, for four months, since changes in attitude are frequently short-lived.

To summarize, Invest in Your Child's Future appears to have been successful in changing parents' attitudes, particularly those concerning independence, trust, and communication. It has also been effective in changing the 'parenting self-concept', making parents feel that they are coming closer to their ideals in this important area. There is less evidence of indirect effects on the Kindergarten children, themselves. Expecting this change in a short four month time span may be unrealistic. It would be interesting to re-test these children after another year.

A. INTRODUCTION

Invest in Your Child's Future is a parent education program developed by the Society for Education and Support for Parents, based on an Adlerian model. The program was developed specifically for the kindergarten level, since this is the year in which the child has his or her first introduction to the school system, and also the year in which parents are most involved in school activities. Invest in Your Child's Future was implemented in the St. Albert Protestant Separate School on a one year trial basis. Two courses were offered, one in the fall (September to January) and one in the winter (February to May). Each course was sixteen weeks in duration; with classes once a week for two hours at a time. Priority was given to parents of kindergarten children, but some parents with younger children were accepted where space permitted. Those taking the course were predominantly mothers, but some fathers also participated.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Invest in Your Child's Future is a comprehensive program designed to increase the self-concept of children through the simultaneous efforts of parents and teachers. It is felt that by having participation of both parents and teachers the education of the total child is enhanced. To enable positive growth of the young child the following objectives are incorporated into a parent and teacher program:

- For parents and teachers to gain an understanding of a practical theory of human behavior.
- For parents and teachers to gain confidence in adult-child relationships.
- To develop more effective parent-teacher communication.
- To provide support and encouragement to parents and teachers.

Through the parent/teacher program, the child learns to become internally motivated while caring for others, to become responsible for his/her own behavior, and to acquire a problem-solving attitude toward difficult situations.

Program Components

The program, consisting of three major components, is based on Adlerian psychology. A democratic ideal is stressed which focuses on freedom with order as opposed to an authoritarian or permissive system. Equality of worth and mutual respect are two other essential qualities of a democratic relationship.

All of the components are carried on over the same 16 week period in order to assure simultaneous effort from both the parents and teachers involved.

Each of the components is briefly outlined below.

Component 1: Parent Education Program

The parent education program consists of 16, two-hour lessons. Each class offers a balance of education and group problem-solving. The parenting program focuses on key issues from Adlerian psychology combined with concepts from other schools of thought. Lectures, written materials, tapes, films and group activities are used to convey the ideas.

Component 2: Teacher Education Program

Teacher inservices covering the same topics as in the parent program are provided. Each teacher inservice is designed to be of three hours duration. Although there are three inservices described in this manual, four or five would be ideal.

Component 3: Consultations

In conjunction with the parent education program and the teacher inservices, there are individual consultations with teachers, individual consultations with parents and joint consultations with parents and that child's teacher. These consultations include the instructor/consultant and facilitate simultaneous effort at home and at school.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last 20 to 25 years, there has been an accelerating demand for parenting courses and information. Questions about effective parenting have come from a number of societal changes including increasing mobility and divorce, more mothers joining the work force, and rapidly changing values. As a result of this demand, a variety of parenting programs have been developed. Some of these are preventative, while others are therapeutic in orientation. Some programs are best suited for use with specific groups, such as parents of handicapped children, abusive parents, or school-aged students.

The literature reviewed here concerns group programs for parents which are primarily preventative in orientation, dealing with general developmental issues and parenting techniques. This type of program generally falls into one of three categories: behavioral, communication-oriented, or Adlerian.

Each of these three types of programs, despite differences in content, conform to Fine's (1980) definition of parent education as "...a systematic and conceptually based program, intended to impart information, awareness, or skills to the partitipants on aspects of parenting." (p. 5) Sessions are usually held weekly for several hours over a six to ten week period. Formats generally include the presentation of ideas, group discussion and skill-building exercises. There is often a "homework" component in which parents are encouraged to try ideas at home.

BEHAVIORAL PROGRAMS:

The behavioral approach to parenting is based on principles of experimental psychology. These programs teach parents how to use the reinforcing or punishing qualities of antecedent stimuli to modify the behaviors of their children. They focus on observable and measurable behavior, rather than on feelings or interactions. Because of their emphasis on measurement, behavioral approaches dominate published research. Reviews of this literature generally support the effectiveness of these techniques (Berkowitz and Graziano, 1972; Forehand and Atkeson, 1977; Johnston and Katz, 1973; O'Dell, 1974), particularly for changing specific, overt behaviors such as aggressiveness (e.g.,. Patterson, 1974), school phobia (Tahmisian and McReynolds, 1971), or self-injurious behavior (Wolfe et al, 1967). The major problem with this type of program has been the failure to generalize across different settings, behaviors and times. (Forehand and Atkeson, 1977). This means that each problem must be treated individually, a time-consuming proposition in many cases.

Most of the available behavioral programs are oriented toward parents who have children with particular behavioral problems or handicapping conditions. Bernal and North (1978) have compiled a list of 29 parent training manuals (only 5 of which have been systematically evaluated). One of the most promising has been developed by Patterson and his colleagues (Patterson, Reid, Jones and Conger, 1975) for use with families of aggressive children. Interestingly, some of the behavioral programs have been shown to be effective in book format alone, with no groups or leaders involved. These include, for example, Living with Children (Patterson and Gullion, 1976), Shopping with Children (Green, Clarke and Risely, 1977) and the Steps to Independence series (Baker et al, 1976a).

COMMUNICATION-ORIENTED PROGRAMS:

The second type of parenting courses includes methods whose primary aim is to improve parent-child communication. These programs have often grown out of the counselling literature and focus on skills such as emphatic responding, reflective listening and self-awareness. While communication based courses have been developed by a number of people, (e.g., Ginott, 1965; Carkhuff and Bierman, 1975) the most widely used in Gordon's Parent Effectiveness training or P.E.T. (1975).

P.E.T. has been extremely influential in the parenting field. In 1976, Gordon and Sands reported that 250,000 parents had taken the course, over 8000 leaders had been trained, and a million copies of P.E.T.had been sold. This is the most organized of the courses, operating essentially as a franchise, with a portion of course fees returning to Effectiveness Training Associates. Course methods and concepts are described in Gordon, (1975) and Gordon and Sands (1976).

Unfortunately, there is little research on the effectiveness of P.E.T. In 1977, Rinn and Markle reviewed the 14 studies then available on P.E.T., only one of which was published. None of the studies with control groups supported the effectiveness of the program. They concluded:

> Overall the research on P.E.T. has been limited in scope and inadequate in design. Of the studies reviewed none possessed the methodological rigor necessary for informed judgements regarding the effectiveness of the technique as a training strategy...the data available on P.E.T. for review do not support the assumption that Parent Effectiveness Training is effective. (p.105).

Since this review, Taylor and Swan (1982) have published a study assessing P.E.T.-trained parents' use of course concepts one year after the program. Trained parents did not chose P.E.T. approaches to problem solving any more often than controls at this time, and their adolescents reported even less use of the P.E.T. techniques than did the parents.

ADLERIAN PROGRAMS:

The third approach to teaching parenting skills has developed from the work of Alfred Adler, a contemporary of Freud. As put forth by Dreikurs and Saltz (1964) and Dinkmeter and McKay (1976), this approach stresses the importance of the family group. It is based on an educative rather than a medical model, regarding misbehavior as a result of lack of knowledge or experience which can be rectified through education. The ideal family structure is a democratic one where all family members are equal in value, sharing rights and responsibilities (termed freedom with order). This is contrasted with the more traditional authoritarian model (order without freedom) and a permissive environment (freedom without order). Children's behavior is examined in terms of its goals, with the assumption that the primary goal of all people is to establish a social niche, with a sense of belonging, acceptance, and usefulness.

Adlerian parent study courses emphasize this democratic model as a reflection of mutual respect. Misbehavior of children is described in terms of mistaken goals, and natural or logical consequences replace the concepts of reward and punishment which are founded in authoritarianism. Much emphasis is placed on encouragement of the child, to promote a feeling of self-worth through communication of respect, love and support. Dirkmeyer and McKay (1976) have produced a commercially packaged Adlerian

program called STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) which contains leader's manual, parent handbook, cassette tapes, posters and carrying case. This program is so structured that there is no requirement that leaders be professionally trained.

There are only a few research studies published evaluating the effectiveness of Adlerian parent education programs. From those which have been published, however, there is evidence that the programs have been successful in changing parent attitudes and knowledge (e.g., Moore and Dean - Zubritsky, 1979; Berrett, 1975; Fears, 1976; Summerin and Ward, 1981). Further, Thorn (1974) has found that changes in attitude continued for two years with good knowledge retention (At least for the 40% of the subjects who returned questionnaires). Changes in the behavior of children after the program are less frequently found (Croake and Burness, 1976), although parents themselves report lower levels of bothersome behavior. (Berrett, 1975).

In his review of parent education; Henry (1981) concluded:

> The Adlerian approach is well received by parents and is appropriate for use with parents of children of virtually all ages. The content is well-balanced in terms of communications and disciplinary techniques. There is a considerable overlap between the conceptual bases of the behavioral and Adlerian approaches (i.e., goals of misbehavior, importance of using encouragement, and use of natural and logical consequences).

He criticizes, however, the Adlerian distinction between praise and encouragement, which is not supported by the literature and which may indeed reduce the overall amount of positive reinforcement received by children.

In summary, each of the three approaches to parent education appears to have some strengths and some weaknesses. Behavioral approaches are well-researched, but appear to be most applicable to groups with common, overt problems. While it is possible to change most behaviors using these methods, it is difficult to get them to generalize to other behaviors or situations. The communications programs, particularly P.E.T., are well organized and marketed, but there is an appalling lack of documentation of program effects, given the huge number of people who have been involved in such courses. In some ways, the Adlerian programs appear to be a middle ground between the other two, examining both behavior and communication. Evaluations of Adlerian programs indicate that they have some impact on attitudes of parents and on parents' perceptions of their children. Clearly, however, more research is needed to investigate the effects of the program on the children, themselves.

It is interesting to note that, although many of these parenting programs are given by school counsellors and reported in educational journals, there is little explicit coordination between school and home. Some programs have been adapted for teachers, (e.g., Dreikurs, Guenwald & Pyper, 1971) but there is no published evidence of the kind of integrated approach used in the program evaluated here.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the ECS Parent Education program was carried out using a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test design with a control group. Both the course participants and the control were tested before and after the course was given. In addition, a delayed post-test was administered to the fall course and control groups four months after the course ended. The overall design is presented in Table C-1 below:

TABLE C-1 TEST SCHEDULE

GROUPS	N	SEPT/OCT	JAN/FEB	MAY/JUNE
Fall course (Sept to Jan)	38	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post
Control I	21	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed Post
Winter Course (Jan to May)	39	-	Pre-test	Post-test
Control II	21	-	Pre-test	Post-test

1. TESTS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Data for the study was collected from three sources: parents, teachers and kindergarten students. With a few exceptions, the same questionnaires were used at all time periods. A summary of the tests is given in Table C-2.

TABLE C-2 QUESTIONNAIRES AND TESTS ADMINISTERED

Respondents	Test Name Type	Type of Information
Parents	Parent Information Form	Demographic information previous parenting courses, goals and objectives.
	Parent Attitude Scale	Beliefs about children and parenting.
	Parent's Report	Comparison of actual and ideal parenting styles.
	Course Evaluation (course groups post-test only)	Feelings about the way the course was presented and what was learned.
Teachers	Social Competence Scale	Rating of child's classroom behavior.
	Problem Check List (not included in May test battery).	Inventory of problems often encountered with Kindergarten children.
Kindergarten Children	Purdue Self-Concept Test	Children's impressions of themselves and their abilities.

a) PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

The Parent Information Form was developed specifically for this evaluation. It requested basic demographic information such as parents'occupation, age category and education level, as well as previous education in parenting, and personal course objectives. This information was used in the initial comparison of course and control groups to determine their similarity on these dimensions. Parents also completed two attitude questionnaires: The Parent Attitude Scale or PAS (Hereford, 1963) and the Parent's Report (Cohen and Dibble, 1973).

The Parent Attitude Scale was developed by C. F. Hereford in 1963 for use in the education of a school-based, discussion-oriented parent education program. This test provides scores in five different areas:

i) Confidence in the Parenting Role - A confident parent is one who feels sure of him/herself, able to meet the demands of parenthood, and not overwhelmed by the difficulties of parent-child relations.

ii) Causation of the Child's Behavior: At one end of this continuum is the parent who believes that behavior is determined by heredity or other immutable causes. At the other extreme is the parent who feels that parental actions can have some impact on outcome, in interaction with other factors.

iii) Acceptance of the Child's Behavior and Feelings: This scale is a combination of items indicating acceptance of developmental changes and of behavior and feelings such as aggression. It also includes items carrying the idea of not pushing the child to develop too fast.

iv) Understanding: Communication between parents and children including sharing ideas and feelings, and also joint decision-making.

Scores on each subscale range from 75 to 15, with a lower score indicating a more positive attitude. Total scores on this instrument have a potential range from 75 to 375. The split half reliability of the scales for the norming group ranged from .68 to .84, with a mean of .80. The concepts examined were salient to the Adlerian perspective used in this course, and the scale scores successfully differentiated between course and control groups in the original research.

The Parent's Report (Cohen and Dibble, 1973) examines the parenting issue from a different perspective. In this questionnaire, parents are asked to indicate how they actually behave vis-a-vis a particular child, and how the ideal parent would behave. The test provides 5 Factor Scale scores, with a maximum subscale score of 24 indicating very positive behavior. The Factor scales include:

i) Respect for autonomy: Parental control vs independence; joint decision-making.

ii) Control through guilt and anxiety: At the negative extreme, these items relate to controlling children through reminding them of past problems, parent worry, etc.

iii) Consistency: Items refer to establishing and maintaining consistent rules.

iv) Child-Centeredness: Items relate to care and attention to the child; emotional closeness.

v) Detachment: This factor relates to withdrawal from the child when the parent is displeased or disappointed.

Eleven scores were derived from the Parents' report. There were five factor scale scores giving parent's impressions of 'How I Really Am', five indicating 'How The Ideal Parent Would Be' and a Discrepancy score summing the difference between the two ratings on each of the twenty items.

The final piece of information gathered from parents was the Course Evaluation. This brief questionnaire was completed only by those in the course and concerned course organization and presentation as well as subjective ratings of the amount learned in different areas.

b) Teacher Questionnaires

Teachers completed two questionnaires for each child in their class whose parents were part of the course or control groups. Developed by Kohn, Parnes and Rossman in 1979, the Social Competence Scale and the Problem Check-List are both based on a two factor model of functioning. The first factor concerns the child's use of opportunity in the classroom; i.e., his/her interest, curiosity, assertiveness and ability to cooperate with peers. The second factor indicates the ability of the child to conform to rules and expectations of the teacher and the classroom situation.

The Social Competence scale assesses both positive and negative behavior of the child over a broad range of classroom situations. The Problem Checklist, on the other hand, focusses on common problems experienced in pre-school classrooms. The two measures are correlated, but not identical, since the absence of problems does not necessarily imply competent functioning. There is extensive research validation for these scales in terms of correlations with conceptually related and unrelated tests. (Kohn, 1977). The two factors measured are found in most research into competence, albeit under different names.

The Social Competence Scale was completed at all three time periods. Because of time pressures near the end of the year, however, the Problem Checklist was omitted from the May/June testing. This reduced demands on teachers, particularly those who had a number of children from their classes involved in the course or control groups.

c) CHILD TESTS:

The final test used was the Purdue Self-Concept Scale for Pre-school Children. (Cicerelli, c1973). This test was individually administered to the children by a trained examiner. It consists of a booklet of pictures with brief descriptions. Each page presents a positive and a negative picture and the child is asked 'Which child is most like you?. The internal consistency reliability for four and five year olds ranged between .82 and .89 on this test with a two-week test-retest reliability of.70. The test scores correlate significantly with teachers' ratings, providing evidence of validity.

Self-Concept scores have a maximum total of 40, with means for four and five year olds in the norming sample ranging from 29 to 33. Although scores tend to be high, there is some room for improvement before the ceiling is reached. (This is the largest problem with tests of self-concept for pre-schoolers since their scores tend to be globally positive, with little room to show improvement.)

2. THE CONTROL GROUP

In order to compare changes in those attending the course with changes which occur normally during a child's kindergarten year, a control group was recruited. There are two parallel school systems in St. Albert, the Protestant Separate School System in which the course was offered and the Public School System which is predominantly Catholic.

A letter was sent home with kindergarten students in the Public Schools, asking parents if they would be interested in attending this type of parenting course, if it were available. Their responses made it possible to get a community-wide estimate of the number of parents interested in this type of course.

From the sixty-eight parents who indicated interest, a random sample of forty five was chosen, twenty-one as a control for the fall course, and twenty-four as a control for the winter. These parents were then contacted by phone and asked to help in the evaluation by completing the questionnaires and by allowing their children to be tested at school. Of the parents contacted in this way; only three (6.7%) refused to participate, all in the winter term.

In addition to the more standardized measures, a course evaluation form was developed and given to participants at the end of the course. Results of this evaluation are given in Table D-3.

Although the letters were sent to 'parents', those responding were generally mothers. Fathers were also asked to participate when it was indicated that they might also be interested in attending the course. In this way, nine fathers were involved in the control group to match nine in the course. (There was a high drop-out rate for fathers, however, with few completed questionnaires for the post-test).

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed in a number of steps. First, the demographic information from the fall and winter groups was compared to determine group equivalence. Since groups were very similar, fall and winter data was then combined to test for pre-post and course-control differences. Comparisons were made using a two-way analysis of variance with repeated measures to determine the statistical significance of differences over time, differences between the control and course groups, and interactions between the two. As well, the delayed post-test results for the fall group were compared to their pre and post-test results.

Since limited information was available for fathers, their responses were not included in the major analyses. Also omitted for these analyses were questionnaires completed by the few mothers who attended the course even though they had no child in kindergarten. The one exception to this was the analysis of the course evaluation form where all respondents were included.

D. RESULTS

The results of the study will be presented in four sections: Information Form Data, Course Evaluation, Pre-post Comparisons, and Delayed Post-test Information.

1. INFORMATION FORM DATA

This form was used to collect information to assess the equivalence of the course and control groups, and also to describe the people who took part in the study in general demographic terms. (See Table D-1).

Overall, more mothers of boys took the course than mothers of girls, particularly in the fall. Over 50% of mothers in all groups have (or had) professional occupations, with approximately a quarter still working, at least part-time. Fathers also tended to have high-level occupations, with approximately 60-80% in each group holding white collar or professional positions.

Educational levels were also fairly high, with over 40% of mothers and 50% of fathers in all groups having university or other post-secondary training. In terms of age, most mothers were in the 26 to 35 year range, with fathers slightly older. Only 11% of the whole sample were under 26. Interestingly, many of these parents who have expressed interest in taking a parenting course have already participated in previous ones. In the fall course 44% had previously taken a course in parenting. The most common types of course taken by parents were based on Adlerian principles (like this one), on the work of Gordon (Parent Effectiveness Training) or on general parenting issues.

TABLE D-1: COURSE-CONTROL COMPARISON ON DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES
(% OF GROUP RESPONDING)

		FALL GROUP		WINTER GROUP	
		COURSE	CONTROL	COURSE	CONTROL
1. Sex of Kindergarten Child	Boys	70%	63%	50%	33%
	Girls	30%	37%	50%	67%
2. Mother's Blishen Score	1. Professional I.	0%	0%	0%	0%
	2. Professional II.	31	39	24	24
	3. White Collar	31	33	29	47
	4. Skilled Trades	14	17	5	18
	5. Semi-Skilled	11	11	26	12
	6. Unskilled I	9	0	3	0
	7. Unskilled II	0	0	3	0
	8. Housewife	3	0	11	0
3. Father's Blishen Score	1. Professional I.	22%	0%	14%	0%
	2. Professional II.	50%	35%	30%	53%
	3. White Collar	6	24	24	27
	4. Skilled Trades	3	12	11	0
	5. Semi-Skilled	16	29	19	13
	6. Unskilled	3	0	3	7
4. Mother Working	Yes	32%	0%	22%	38%
	No	68%	100%	78%	62%
5. Mother's Age Category	Under 26	0%	5%	0%	0%
	26-30	29	11	26	35
	31-35	56	68	58	59
	36-40	17	11	16	6
	41-45	0	5	0	0

QUESTION	RESPONSE	FALL GROUP COURSE	FALL GROUP CONTROL	WINTER GROUP COURSE	WINTER GROUP CONTROL
6. Father's Age Category	Under 26	0%	6%	0%	0%
	26-30	11	6	8	12
	31-35	64	59	64	53
	36-40	14	24	19	24
	41-50	11	6	8	6
7. Mother's Education	1. Some H.S.	11%	11%	3%	6%
	2. H.S. Grad.	34	32	55	44
	3. Univ. Degree	34	26	18	19
	4. Other Sec. Dip.	20	32	21	31
	5. Post Grad.	0	0	3	0
8. Father's Education	1. Some H.S.	6%	6%	5%	6%
	2. H.S. Grad.	20	39	29	41
	3. Univ. Degree	34	22	37	24
	4. Other Sec. Dip.	20	28	26	18
	5. Post Grad.	20	6	3	12
9. Previous Course in Parenting	Yes	44	16	21	24
	No	56	84	79	77
10. Average Age of Child (At Sept 1.)	-	5.05	5.13	5.23	N/A
11. Maximum Number of Respondents	-	36	21	38	21

The remainder of the Parent Information Form asked parents to rank order their objectives in taking this type of course and to rate the sources of influence on them as parents (See Table D-2).

In all groups, the highest ranked objectives were 'Improve my relationship with my children', 'Learn new techniques for effective parenting (Parent survival skills)', and 'Learn more about child behavior and development', (in this order, in all cases). There was a significant difference between course and control groups for the only one item. The control group rated 'Improving my relationship with my child' as of highest importance more consistently than did the course group.

In terms of sources of influence on parenting style, there is little difference among groups. Most sources are rated as being of average influence, with all four groups deriving the most information from the way their parents behaved when they were young. (In a few cases, there were negative models, with respondents trying <u>not</u> to behave as their parents had).

The last question asked parents to compare themselves with others on a number of characteristics relating to child-rearing. Parents rated themselves average or high on these characteristics, almost without exception. Mean ratings are particularly high for 'Interest in Children' and 'Time spent with your Children' and somewhat lower for 'Knowledge of Child Development'.

To summarize, results here indicate that the course and control groups were very similar in terms of background characteristics, personal objectives for this type of course, and feelings of adequacy as a parent. As a whole, the respondents tend to be of high socio-economic levels with high levels of education. They are also parents who are interested in children and perceive themselves as having at least average skill in parenting.

TABLE D-2

COURSE-CONTROL COMPARISON OF
SOURCES OF OBJECTIVES AND INFLUENCE
(MEANS AND SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS

QUESTION	FALL GROUP COURSE	FALL GROUP CONTROL	WINTER GROUP COURSE	WINTER GROUP CONTROL
1) Rank the following objectives in order of their importance to you. (1=high, 8-low)				
a) Improved relationship with children	2.4	2.0	2.3 *	1.5
b) Confidence in parenting role	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.6
c) Learn about child development	3.4	3.7	3.2	3.2
d) Exchange ideas	4.8	5.7	5.5	5.6
e) Better parent-teacher communication	5.3	5.2	5.9	6.3
f) Learn parent survival skills	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.9
g) Personal support and encouragement	5.1	5.4	5.2	5.5
2) Sources of Influence (1-high, 5-low)				
a) Parents as models	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.1
b) Parents as advice givers	3.5	3.1	3.2	3.3
c) Health professionals	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.4
d) Other professionals	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.5
e) Courses in Child Development	3.0	3.7	4.1	3.4
f) Books	3.3	2.8	3.1	2.7
g) Magazines	2.9	3.1	3.2	2.9
h) Parent Education Courses	3.4	3.9	4.4	3.8
i) Friends and Neighbours	3.5	2.8	2.9	3.1
3) Rate yourself on these characteristics (0=low, 3=high)				
a) Knowledge of Child Development	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.1
b) Interest in Children	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.6
c) Time Spent with your Children	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
d) Ability to Communicate with Children	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.3
e) Family Communication	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.4

* $p < .05$

2. PARENT EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

In addition to the more standardized measures, a course evaluation form was developed and given to participants at the end of the course. Results of this evaluation are given in Table D-3.

Almost all participants felt that the two hour meeting time and the group size was about right. Some respondents, particularly in the winter group, felt that the course was too long, although again the majority liked the length of involvement. (Most parent education courses are shorter than this one, generally between six and ten weeks). Almost all course participants felt that the teaching methods were excellent or very good, and reported that the reading materials were both helpful and interesting. One of the concerns voiced by 36% of those in the course was that there was too little time for discussion of individual concerns. This was particularly true in the winter group, even though attempts had been made to devote more time to individual concerns during this course in response to the fall group evaluation. Of those completing the evaluation questionnaires, 82% reported meeting individually with the leaders. This meeting was seen as helpful by all but one of the respondents. Almost 40% of the group would like more time for this type of consultation.

3. COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST TEST SCORES

The fall and winter groups were combined for these comparisons, in order to increase the numbers for the statistical tests, and also to simplify the pattern of results from this complex test battery.

Note that results of the analysis of variance statistical tests for this section will be summarized in the table headings. A significant time effect indicates that pre-test scores are statistically different from the post-test scores. Likewise a group effect is indicative of an overall difference between the groups. A group by time interaction indicates that there is a different pattern of change over time for each of the two groups. The probability figure (p) indicates the likelihood of such difference occurring by chance. Only differences with a probability less than .05 will be considered significant. (Such a difference would occur by chance less than five times in one hundred.)

(a) The Parent Attitude Scale (PAS)

This test yields five subscale scores plus a total score. The possible subscale scores range from 15 (positive) to 75 (negative), with the total score falling between 75 and 375. Note that a positive change in attitude results in a decreased score.

FIGURE D-1 Total scores for the parent attitude scale, before and after the course. (Time effect significant at p .01; time by group effect significant at p .02)

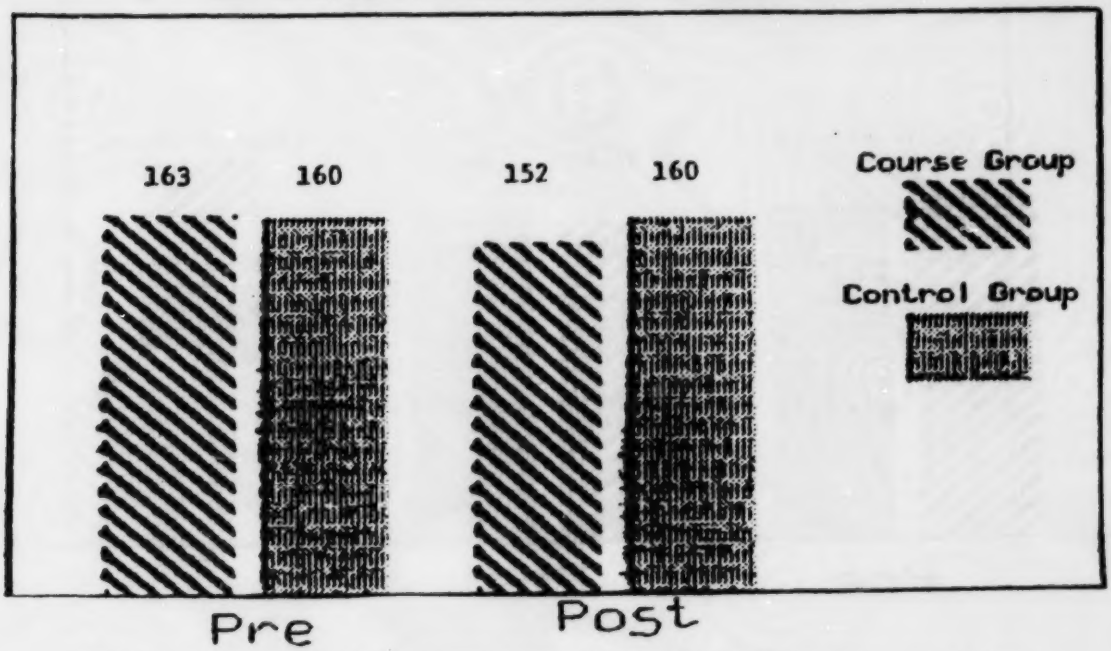
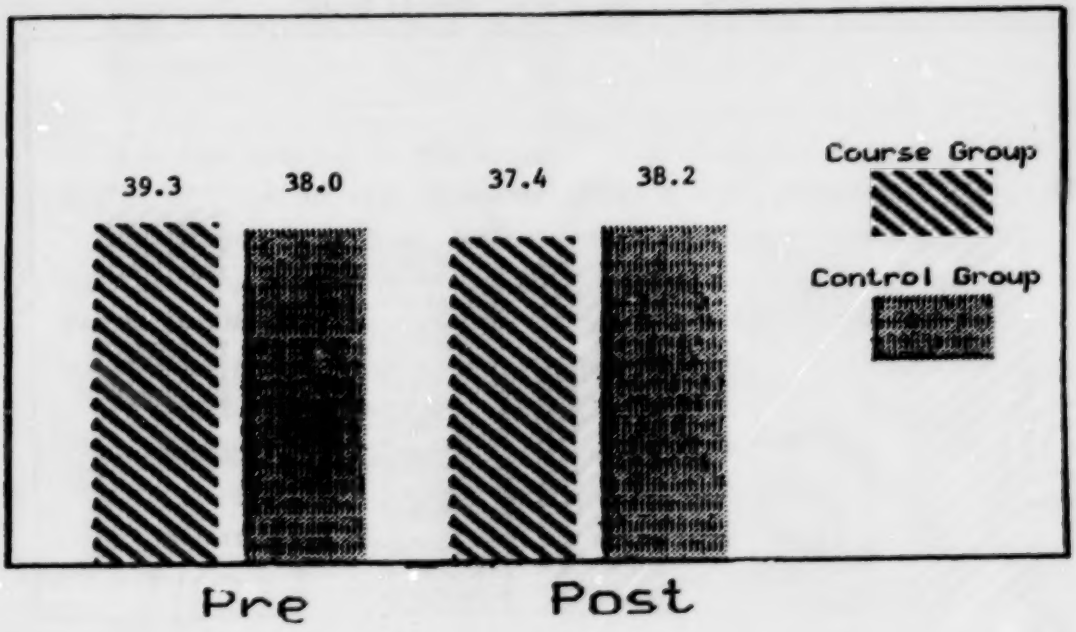


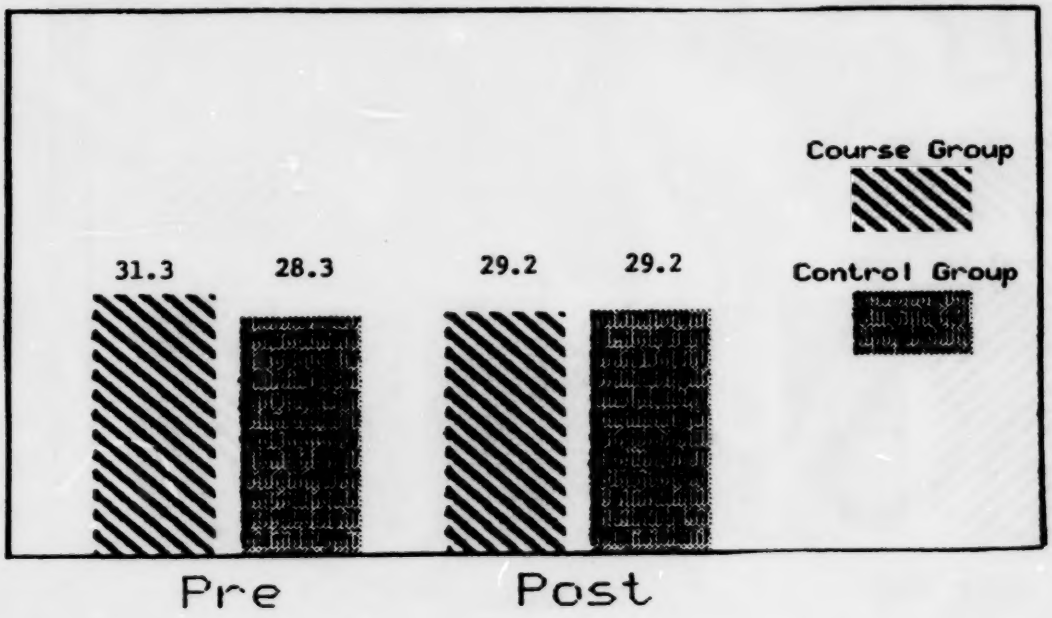
Figure D-1 presents a comparison of the PAS total score means for the two groups before and after the course. The overall attitude toward parenting measured by this scale improved significantly for those taking the course, with little change in the control group scores. The subscale tests below help to specify the areas in which the change occurred.

FIGURE D-2 Parent attitude scale ratings of Confidence, Pre and Post test means for the course and control groups. (No significant differences).



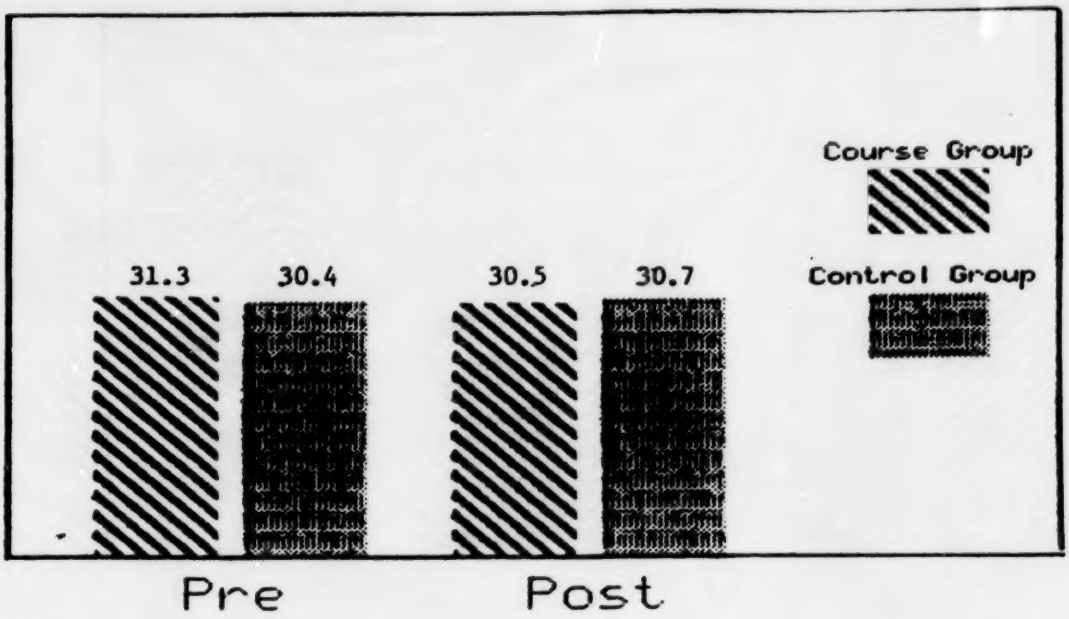
The first subtest is a measure of the parent's confidence in herself, and her ability to cope with the demands of parenting. There are no significant differences here, although there is a tendency for the course group to gain in confidence, while the other group remains stable.

FIGURE D-3 Causation: Pre and Post test means for the course and control groups. (Time by group interaction significant at p=.01).



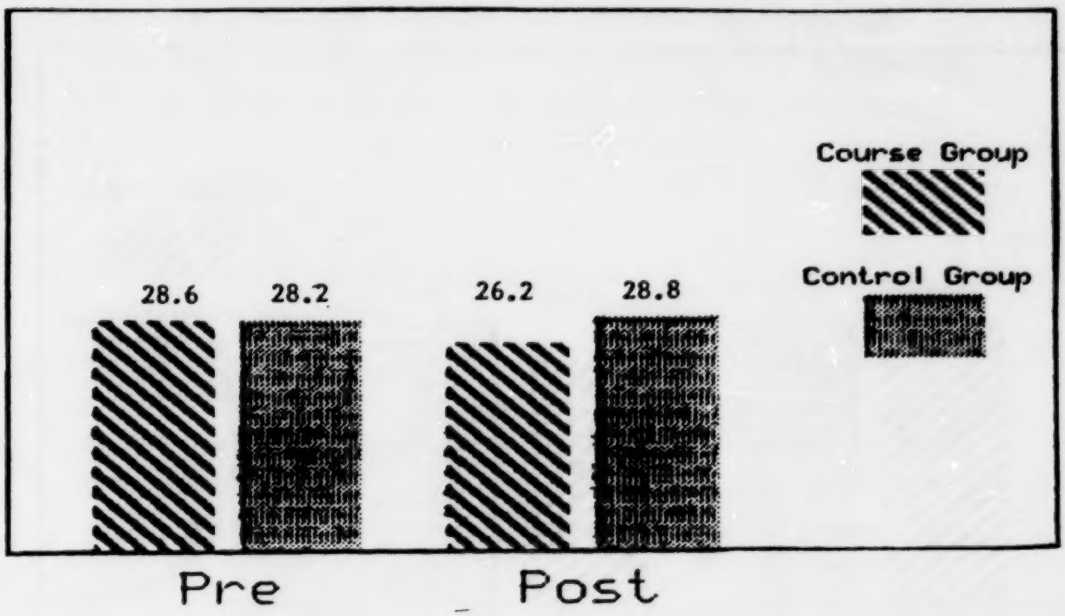
The next scale measures the mother's belief in parents being able to affect their children's behavior and development, in interaction with aspects of the environment. For this scale of causation, the control group starts with a slightly more positive attitude than the course group, but at the end of instruction, the two groups are about equal, representing a gain by the course group.

FIGURE D-4 Acceptance of the Child: Mean scores of the course and control groups before and after the course. (No significant differences).



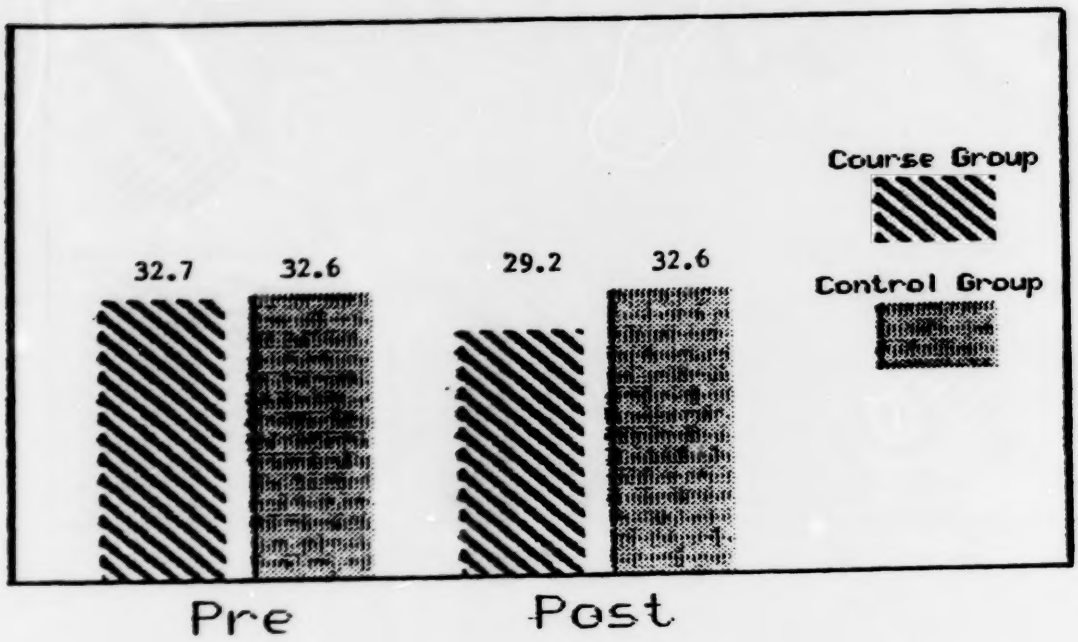
In the third subscale, acceptance of a child as he or she is, there are no significant differences between groups, nor do scores change during the course time. Both groups, at both times, show fairly high levels of acceptance.

FIGURE D-5 Understanding and communication. (Significant time by group interaction, p=.003)



This is one of the aspects of parenting stressed most by the course. It involves communication with the child, and respect for a child's opinions and decisions. Here, there is increased understanding being expressed by course group parents, with no concomitant change in the control ratings. This indicates that course groups parents are more willing to listen to a child's ideas and to talk out problems at the end of the course than they were at the beginning.

FIGURE D-6 Trust and Respect for the Child. (Significant time effect (PL.002)and time by group effect(P=.002)



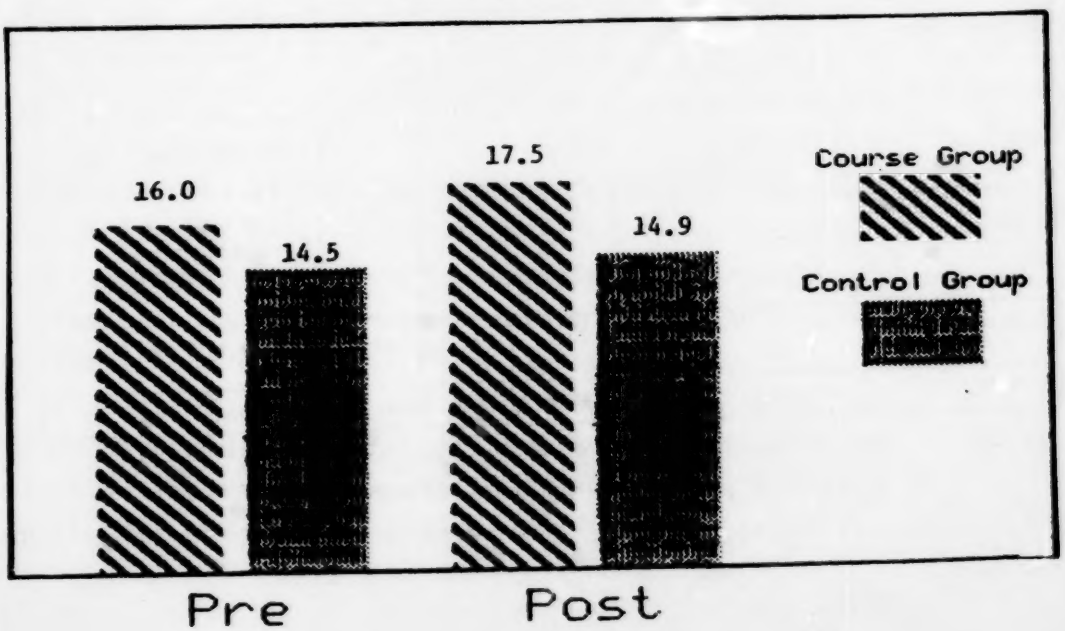
The last of the PAS subscales is termed trust, and involves respect for children as individuals, and confidence in their ability to behave appropriately in different situations. As with understanding, there is an increase in course parents' expressions of trust in, and respect for, their children, during the course. There is no change in the control group's ratings.

b) THE PARENT'S REPORT

The other questionnaire which parents completed was the Parent's Report. As with the PAS, this test is composed of a number of subscales, including autonomy, use of guilt for control, consistency, child centeredness, and detachment. These scales were completed by parents to reflect both actual and ideal behavior. Both actual and ideal scores have a potential range from 0 to 24.

The first scale concerns the degree of autonomy parents grant their children to make their own decisions. Results of the 'actual' ratings are given in Figure D-7. This graph shows that the course group had somewhat higher autonomy scores than the control group at the beginning of the course. This difference widened over time, with the course group increasing the amount of autonomy given, while the control group mean stayed fairly constant.

FIGURE D-7 Parent's report rating of amount of autonomy given to child. (Significant difference between course and control groups, p=.001, and between pre and post test scores, p=.003).



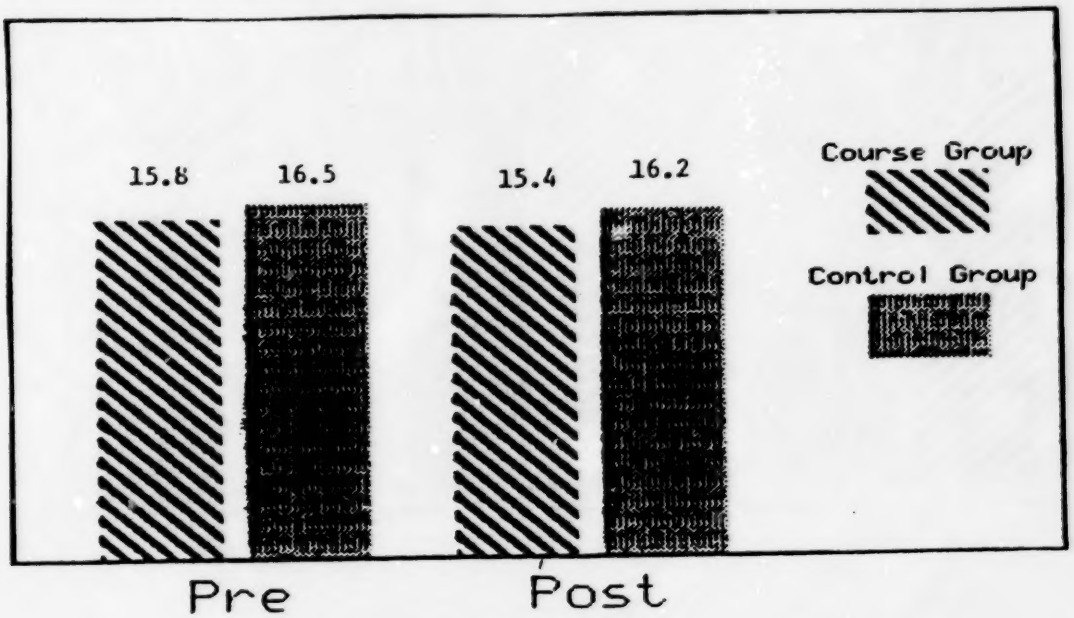
The results of the 'ideal parent' ratings are given in Table D-4, below. In comparing the parents ratings of how much autonomy they grant to their child (the actual score) with the amount they feel they ought to give (the ideal score) several interesting results occur. Parents in both groups feel the kindergarten-aged children should have more autonomy than they are actually given, with scale differences of at least 4 points between actual and ideal mean scores. Course group parents rate this dimension as more desirable than do control group parents at both times. There were no significant changes in ideal score over time.

TABLE D-4 Parent's Report: Ideal Parent Ratings: Means and Tests of Significance.

	Course		Control		Significant Differences
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
1. Respect for Autonomy	20.1	21.1	19.0	19.2	Groups**
2. Consistency	20.3	18.6	19.7	20.1	Group By Time Int.**
3. Non-use of Guilt for Control	22.1	22.9	21.2	20.6	Groups○ Group By Time Int.*
4. Child-Centeredness	15.6	12.5	16.8	16.1	Groups.** Pre-Post *** Group By Time Int.*
5. Detachment	21.9	20.2	22.5	21.6	Pre-Post *
TOTAL	100.1	94.7	99.3	97.8	Pre-Post○

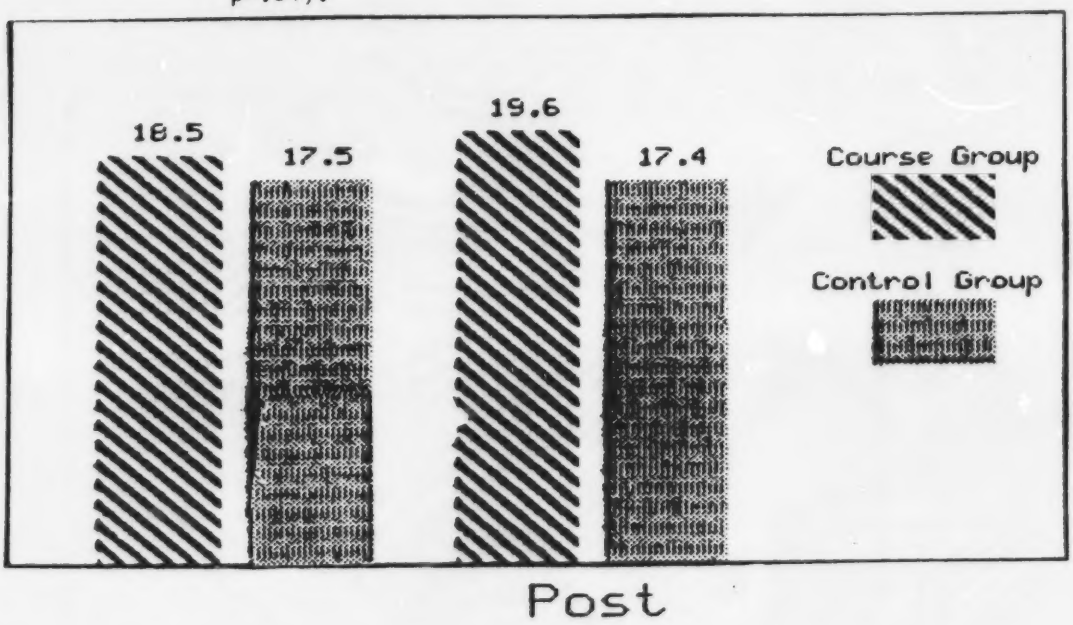
*p ˂.05 **p ˂.01 ***p ˂.001

FIGURE D-8 Parent's Report rating of the consistency with which rules are established and maintained. Mean scores for the course and control groups over time. (No significant differences).



The second dimension of the Parent's Report is that of consistency in setting and keeping rules. Both sets of parents rate themselves as moderately consistent, and there are no differences between groups, nor across time. In the 'ideal' ratings, however, both sets of parents would like to be more consistent. For the course group, this ideal level of consistency declines with time, coming closer to the 'actual' figure. One possible reason for this decline is the stress in the course on setting realistic expectations for oneself as a parent, recognizing the impossibility of being 100% consistent at all times.

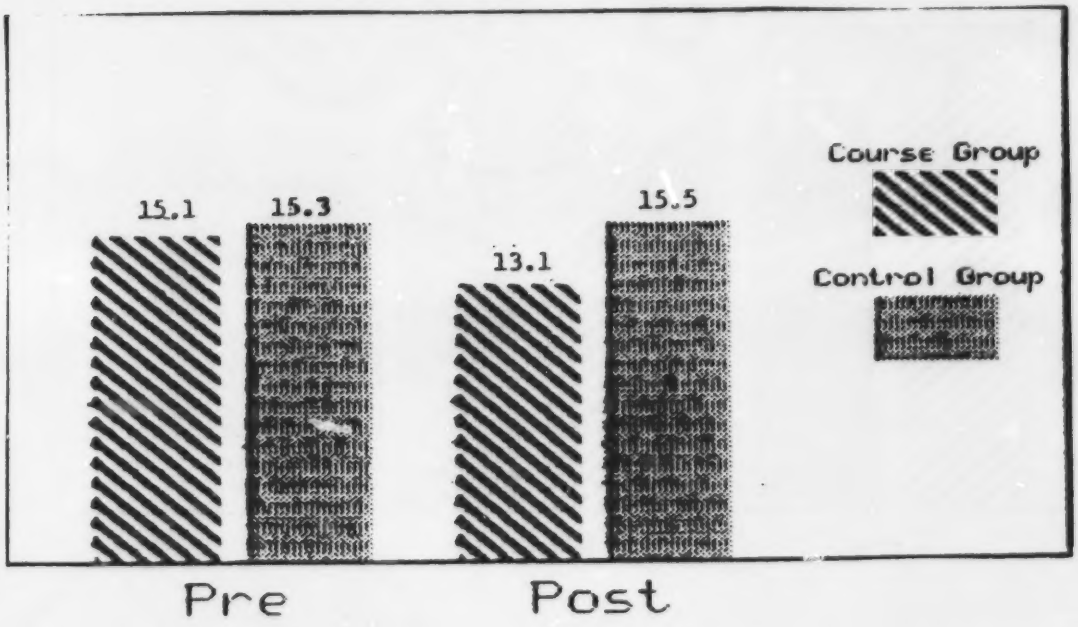
FIGURE D-9 Parent's Report ratings of avoiding the use of guilt-inducing statements as a means of control. Mean scores for the course and control groups. (Significant group difference, p-05, and group by time interaction, p=.04).



As with autonomy, the groups also differed from one another in the ratings of themselves as using guilt for control of behavior, with the control group admitting to doing this somewhat more than the course group. Over time, this difference between groups increases. Thus, at the end of the course, the control group mean stays constant, while those in the course indicate using less guilt as a means of control.

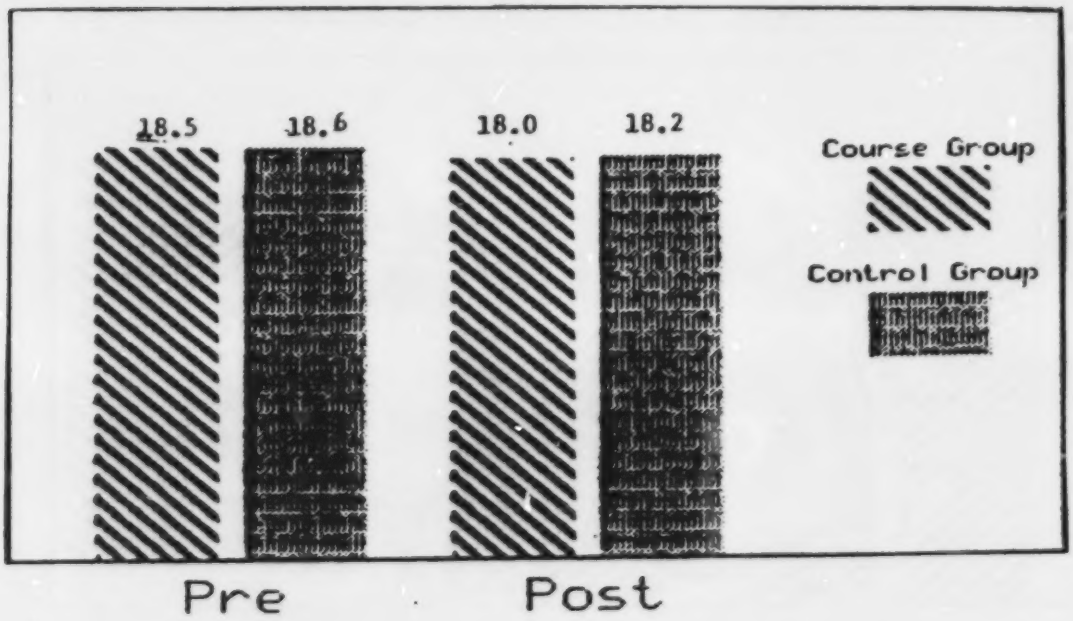
A similar pattern is seen in the 'ideal' ratings, with the course group decreasing their tolerance for this type of control (increasing their score), while the control group ratings indicate somewhat increased tolerance for this type of parenting.

FIGURE D-10 Parent's Report ratings of child centeredness. Mean scores of the course and control groups. (Groups differences are sig. at p=.05, the times are different at p=.04, and the interaction is also significant, p=.01).



The child centeredness subscale of the Parent's Report appears to have been invalid for use in this evaluation. While two questions clearly relate to love and caring, ('I give him a lot of care and attention', and, 'I set limits for activities to help him stay out of trouble.'), the other two questions are: 'I check on what he is doing and whom he is seeing all during the day.', and 'I ask others what he does while he away from me'. Both of these questions imply a child-centeredness which is somewhat extreme, limiting the amount of independence for a child and showing a lack of trust. Given the course stress on encouragement, trust and independence, it becomes easy to explain the significant decline in child-centeredness scores for the course group. A similar pattern is seen in the 'ideal' scores, there the course group would recommend less close supervision than the other group. Clearly these questions need to be re-worded for valid assessment of the dimension of warmth of parenting style.

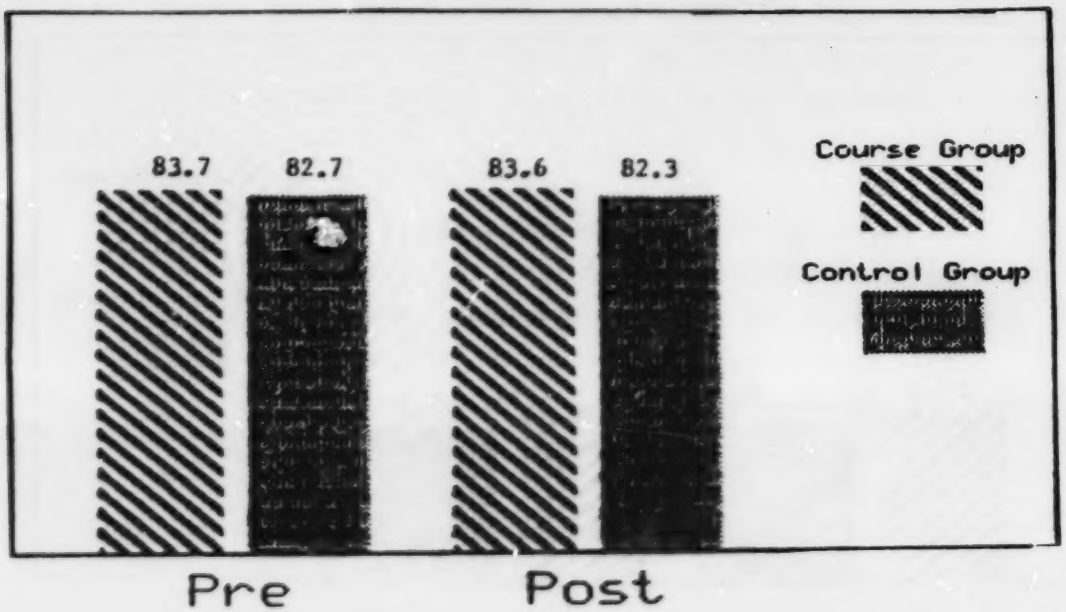
FIGURE D-11 Parent's Report rating of detachment and withdrawal from child during anger. Means for the course and control groups. (No significant differences)



The final dimension of the Parents' Report is that of detachment from the child during periods of anger. Here, there are no significant differences across time, nor between groups in actual scores.

There is, however, a tendency for the ideal scores to decline somewhat over time for both groups. This perhaps reflects more acceptance of withdrawal from a child who is somewhat older, or at least has had a longer experience in the kindergarten setting. It does not appear to be affected by attendance at a parenting course.

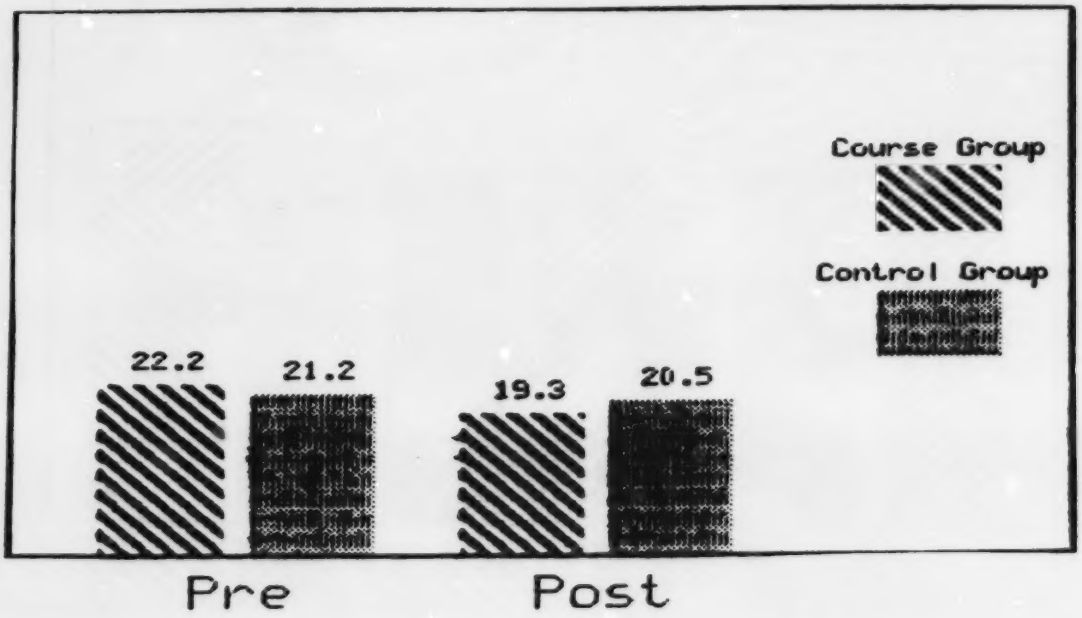
FIGURE D-12 Parent's Report Total Score. (No significant differences).



The results of the total score are somewhat difficult to interpret because of the ambiguity of the child-centeredness scales. There are no significant differences between groups nor across time on this scale; the increases in autonomy and restraint from use of guilt are cancelled out by the decrease in child centeredness, resulting in no change in the total score.

There is a significant change over time, however, in the total ideal ratings. Both course and control groups have lower means after the course time than before, with the course group scores declining 6 points while the control goes down by only 2. Much of this change can be attributed to the change in child-centeredness, but consistency and detachment means are also lower at post-test. This change may be due to the course emphasis on setting realistic levels of expection for oneself as a parent. They are likely also affected by changes in the needs and capabilities of children during their kindergarten year.

FIGURE D-13 Discrepancy between the actual and ideal ratings on the Parent's Report. (Time effect approaches significance, p=.054).



The final measure from the Parents' Report was calculated by summing the absolute difference between actual and ideal ratings for each question. This provided a discrepancy score between a parent's ideals in parenting and her perceptions of actual behavior. These results are presented in Figure D-13. For both groups, this score declines over time, with the difference approaching significance. The course group mean decreases more than that for the control but the interaction is not consistent enough to be statistically significant.

In summary, attending the parenting course appears to have a significant effect on five of the Parent Report scores. Parents in the course group increased the amount of autonomy in decision-making given to their children and reduced their use of guilt as a means of control. The decline in scores on the child-centeredness scale may also indicate more trust and freedom of movement for course children. Course parents also reduced their estimate of the ideal level of consistency in parenting, and saw themselves as being somewhat closer to their ideal level of parenting at the end of the course than did the control group.

(c) THE KOHN SOCIAL COMPETENCE SCALE AND PROBLEM CHECKLIST

The teachers completed two rating scales on the children of course and control group parents. The Social Competence Scale was used during all three testing periods, but the Problem Checklist was omitted during the spring testing period to ease the time burden for teachers.

The results for the Social Competence Scale are presented in Figures D-14 and D-15. The first factor indicates the child's use of opportunities in the classroom, including getting along with peers and showing interest in the available activities. The second factor measures the child's response to authority and rules within the classroom setting.

There are no significant differences for either of these scales in this study. None of the differences between groups nor between time periods is sufficiently large and consistent to reach statistical significance.

FIGURE D-14 Kohn Social Competence Scale, Factor I: Use of classroom opportunity (No significant differences).

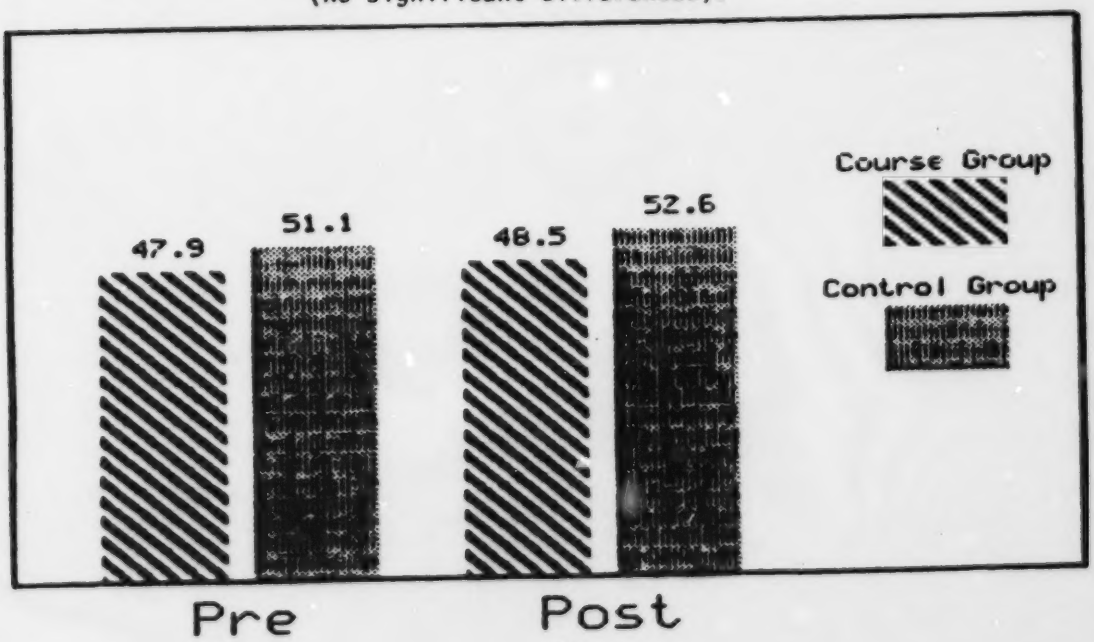
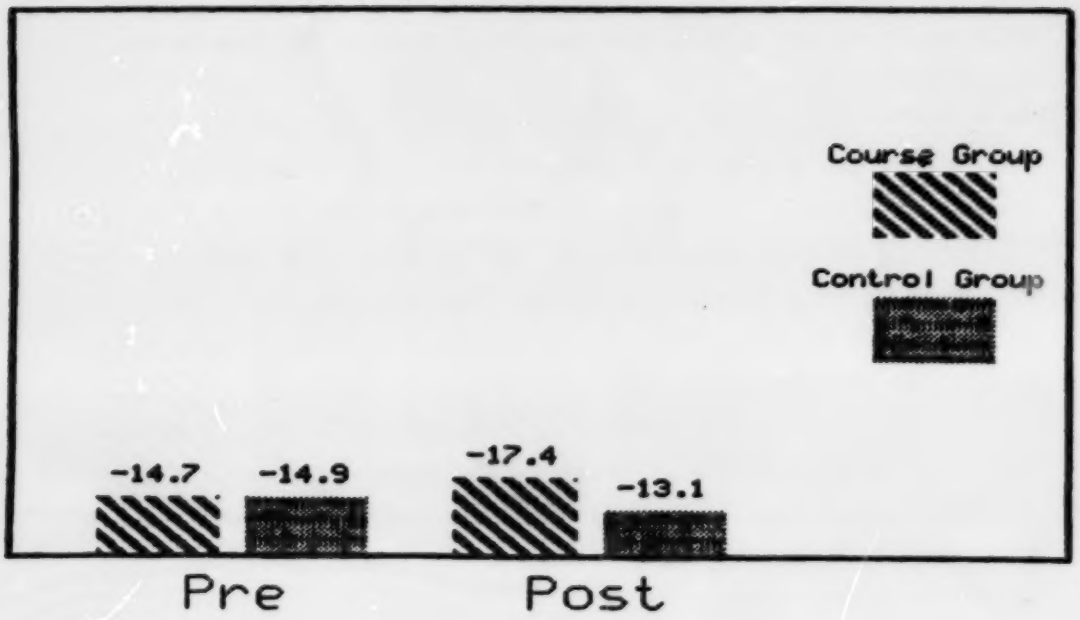


FIGURE D-15 Kohn Social Competence Scale Factor II;
Response to Authority.
(No significant differences).



Similar results are found for the problem checklist. (Figures D-16 and D-17). No significant differences were found for either factor. Overall, there were very few problems indicated by teachers in any area, and variations can all be attributed to chance or to normal variability in observer ratings.

FIGURE D-16 Kohn Problem Checklist Ratings, Factor I: Use of classroom opportunity and peer relations. (No significant differences)

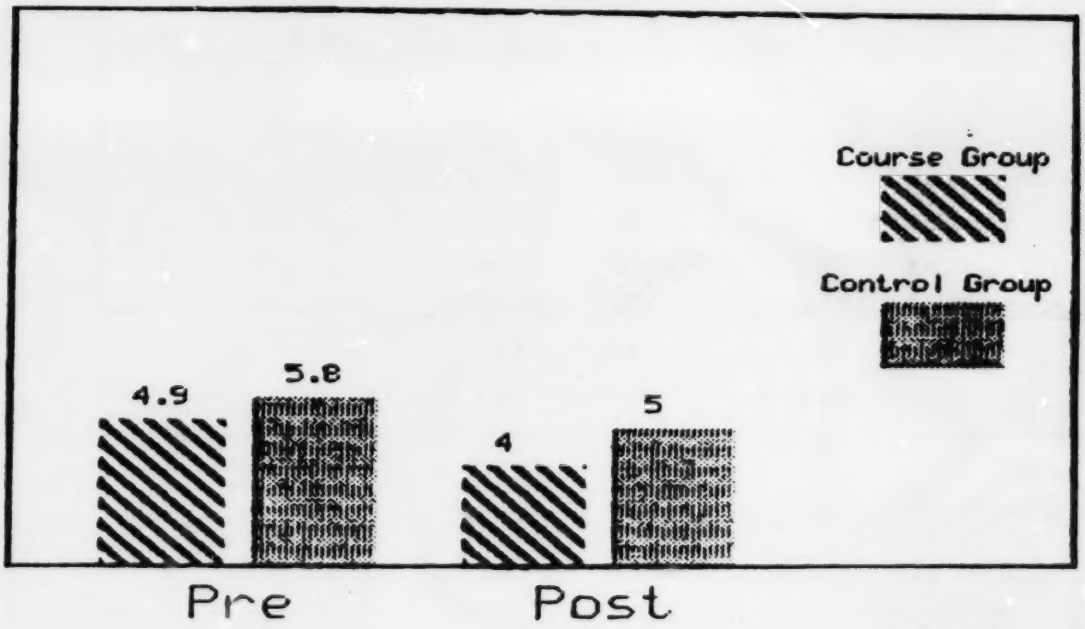
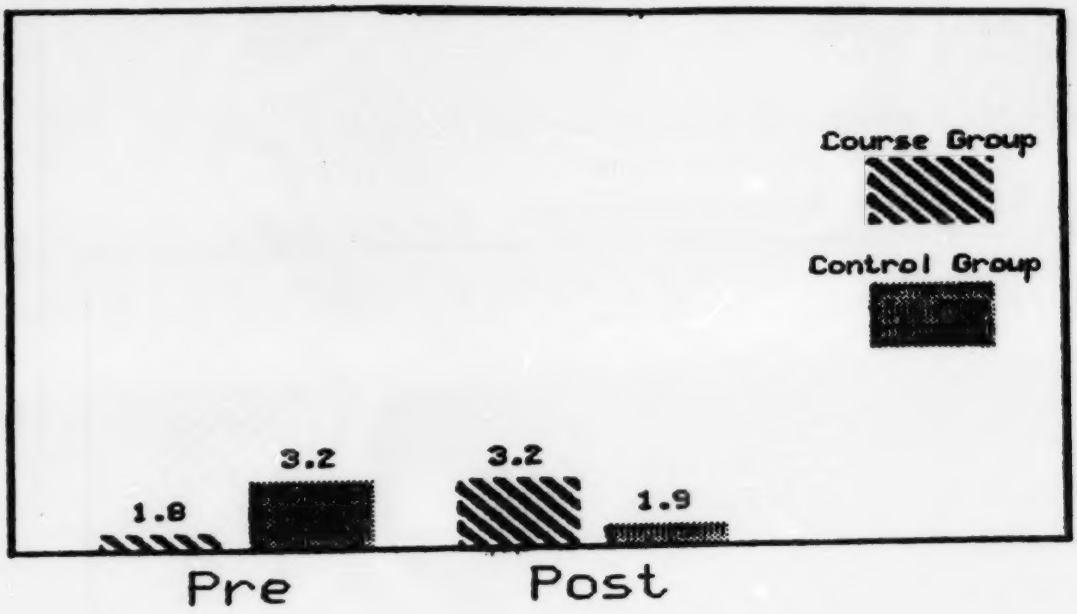


FIGURE D-17 Kohn Problem Checklist Ratings
Factor II: Response to Authority
(No significant differences)



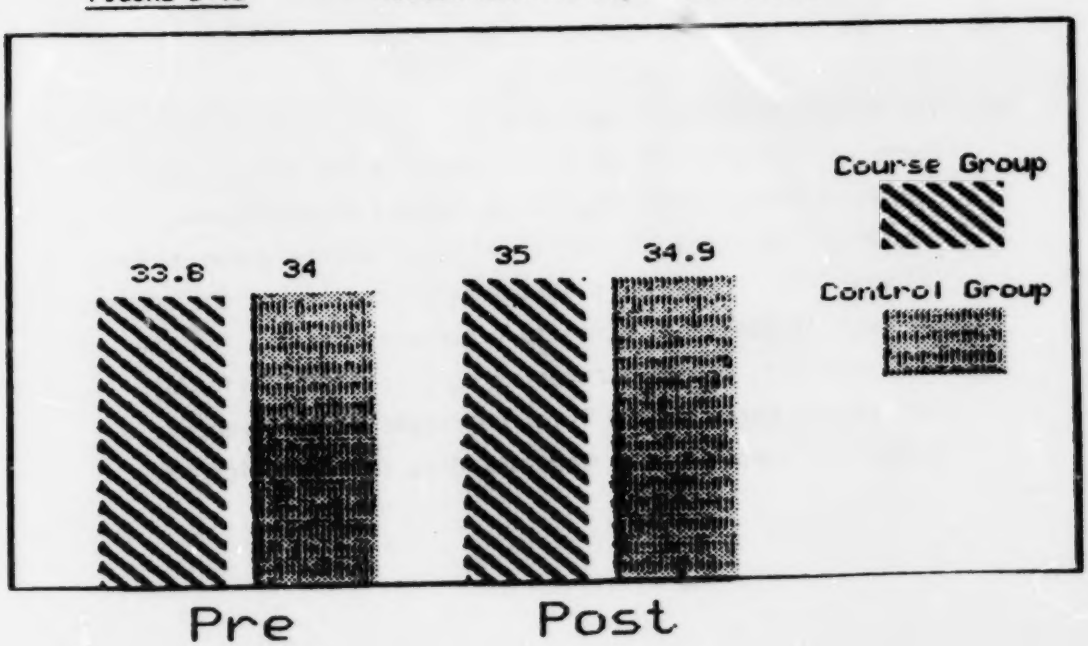
(d) THE SELF-CONCEPT TEST

Self-Concept is a difficult variable to assess at this age level for two reasons: first kindergarten children tend to have global and indifferentiated pictures of themselves, and second,tests have to be extremely simple to do, limiting their accuracy. The test used in this study was the Purdue Self-concept Scale, which appears to be one of the best available. Scores for all groups were fairly high, which is typical for this age group. (Figure D-18).

There were no differences between groups, but the differences across time approach significance (p=.058), even though they are small.

This rise in self-concept with increasing age has been found in other research with this scale, and is largely the result of the older child's ability to function independently. It cannot be attributed to parenting skills.

FIGURE D-18 Purdue Self-Concept Test Scores



4. DELAYED POST-TEST RESULTS

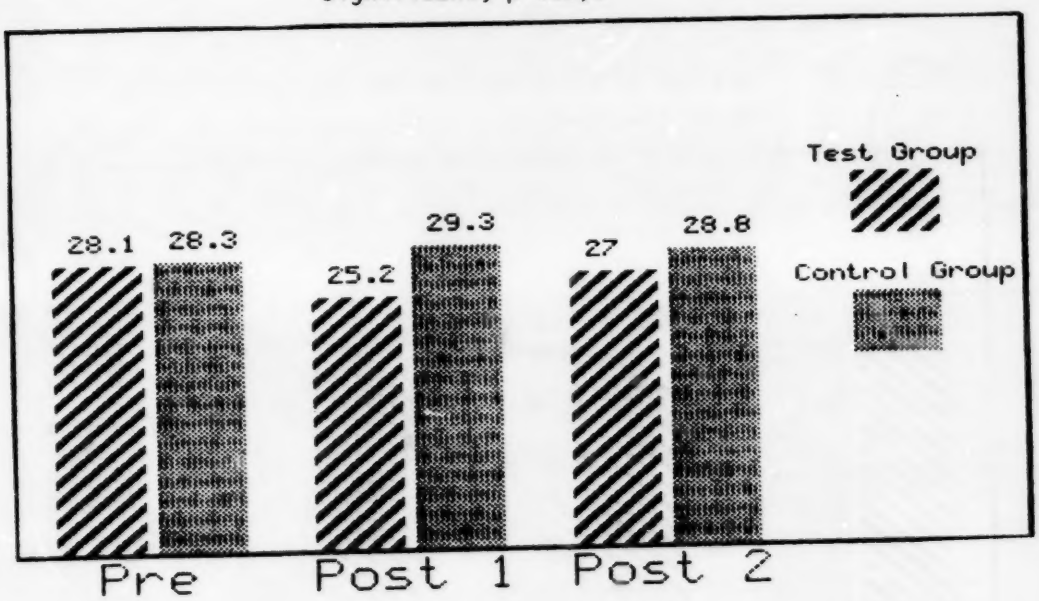
In order to determine whether gains made were sustained or even increased after the course was over, the fall groups were re-tested in the spring, four months after the course ended. This delayed post-test was then compared to the pre and post test results in a series of repeated measures analyses of variance. Because these analyses are based on only half of the respondents, differences must be larger than in the pre-post comparisons described above in order to be statistically significant. Numbers are further reduced because there was a higher non-response rate for this third set of questionnaires than for the other two. In addition to reducing the numbers in the analysis, this means that results must be interpreted as reflecting the views of 'those who return questionnaires', which is likely a somewhat select group.

Results for this section will be summarized in table format except where results reach or approach significance, where they will be portrayed graphically, as before.

a) The Parent Attitude Scale (PAS)

There were no significant differences in the set of PAS scores, although three scales approached significance ($p=.08$). The level of understanding of course group parents (Figure D-19) decreases slightly after the end of the course, although it does not return to pre-course levels. (On the PAS, remember, a lower scores is more positive attitude). For control parents, the level decreases a small amount, indicating somewhat less understanding and communication.

FIGURE D-19 Ratings of understanding on the PAS. Course control groups means at three time periods. (Group by time interaction is almost significant, p=.08).



A similar pattern occurs for ratings of trust. (Figure D-20). The course group gains between pre and post tests are moderated slightly on the delayed post test. Control group scores stay fairly constant and then rise a little at the end of the year, indicating slightly less trust in the child.

FIGURE D-20 Ratings of trust on the PAS course and control group means at three time periods. (Time effect almost significant, p=.08).

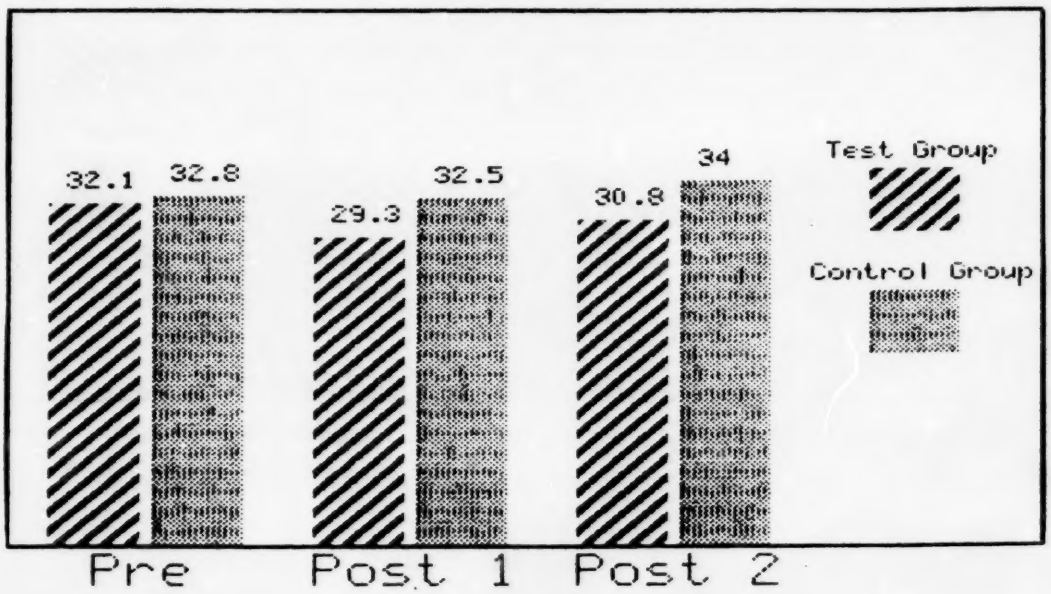


TABLE D-5 Parent Attitude Scale means for the pre, post and delayed post-tests. (Fall groups only)

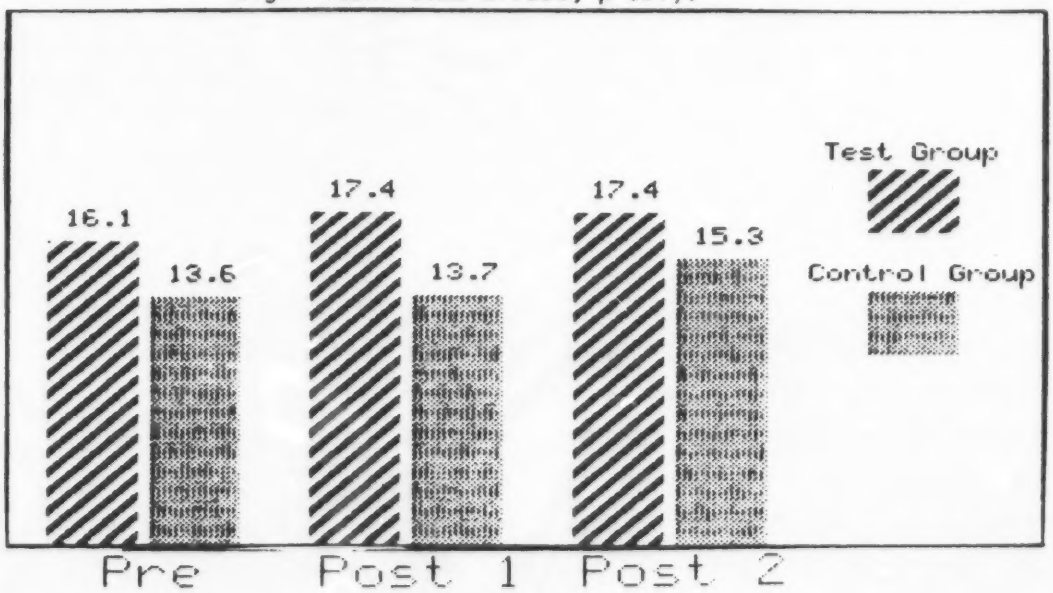
Scale Name	Group	n	Pre Test	Post Test	Delayed Post	Significant Effect
1. Confidence	Course	23	39.1	37.3	37.0	
	Control	10	34.9	35.8	35.6	
2. Causation	Course	23	29.5	27.9	29.7	
	Control	10	28.8	29.4	29.0	
3. Acceptance	Course	23	30.4	29.2	30.1	
	Control	10	29.5	30.3	31.8	
4. Understanding	Course	23	28.1	25.2	27.0	Group By Time
	Control	10	28.3	29.3	28.8	Interact. (p=.08)
5. Trust	Course	23	32.1	29.3	30.8	Time Effect (p=.04)
	Control	10	32.8	32.5	34.0	
TOTAL	Course	23	159.3	149.4	154.7	
	Control	10	161.1	158.7	164.3	

In summary, there is evidence that gains made by parents in attitude during the course decline somewhat after four months, but do not return to their original levels. For the control group, there is a very slight but consistent tendency for these attitudes to become less positive over the kindergarten year. Overall, however, the attitudes measured on this scale are positive, with only small variations, considering the possible range of scores on the scale (from 15 to 75).

b) The Parent's Report

There were statistically significant effects for two of the ratings of actual behavior in the Parent's Report. The course group pre-test ratings of autonomy granted to the child in making decisions are higher than the control group ratings, and then increase in the post test. (Figure D-21). (This is similar to the previous, pre-post analysis).This increase is then maintained during the four month period after the course. For the control group, ratings remain steady through the pre and post tests, but increase in the delayed post-test. This spontaneous raise is perhaps attributable to the increased maturity of a child just completing kindergarten (which may also contribute to the maintenance of course group scores).

FIGURE D-21 Parent's Report rating of autonomy of decision-making that a child is permitted. Means for the course and control groups at all three times. (Significant group effect, p=.001, and a significant time effect, p=.01).



The other significant effect on the Parents' Report was in the ratings of child centeredness. As noted before, this is an ambiguous scale, containing items which imply over-protectiveness in addition to emotional closeness. For the course group, this rating goes down following the course, then increases a little after four months. It is also reduced in the control group, staying constant in the two post-tests. Because of the difficulties with the wording, these changes are difficult to interpret. In both groups, the decline is more likely to be a result of increased independence than a reflection of decreased emotional support.

FIGURE D-22 Parent's Report Ratings of Child-Centeredness. (Significant time effect, p=.001).

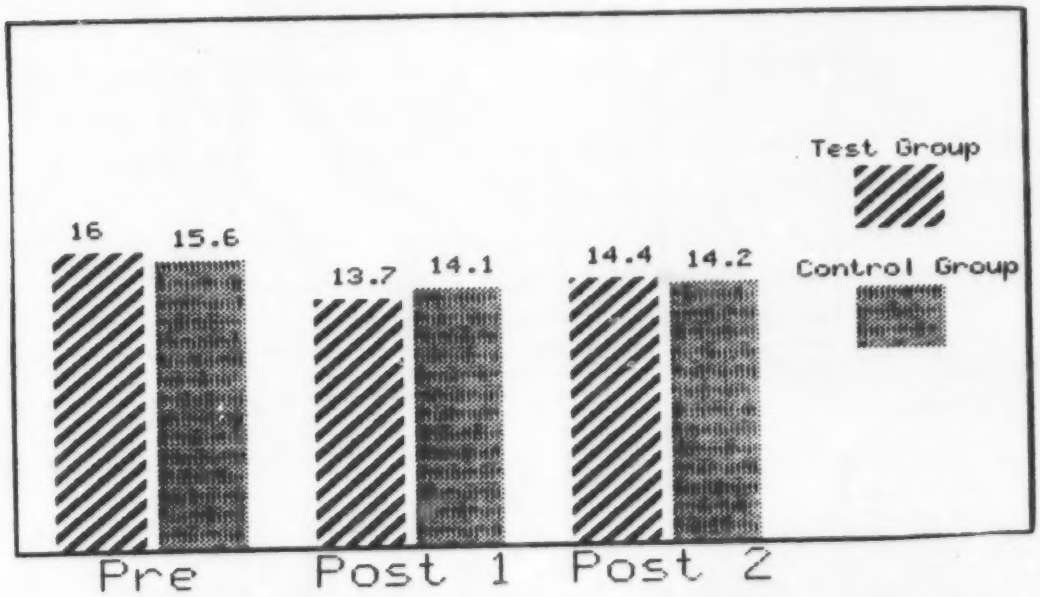


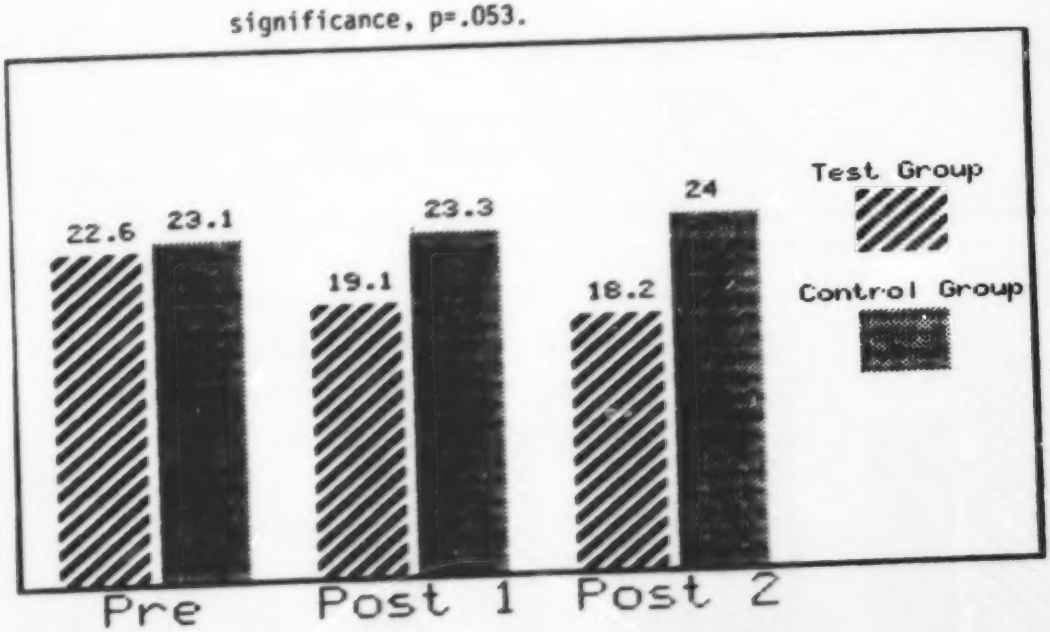
TABLE D-6 Parents' Report means for the actual and ideal ratings. (Pre, post and delayed post-test scores).

Sub-Scale	Group	n	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Delayed Post	Significant Effects
I. Ratings of Actual Behavior						
1. Autonomy	Course	22	16.1	17.4	17.4	Group Effect (p=.001)
	Control	10	13.6	13.7	15.3	Time Effect(p=.01)
2. Consistency	Course	22	15.5	15.0	14.9	
	Control	10	16.1	16.3	15.8	
3. Non-Guilt Use	Course	22	18.6	19.3	18.9	
	Control	10	19.0	19.1	19.6	
4. Child-Centeredness	Course	22	16.0	13.7	14.4	Time Effect (p=.001)
	Control	9	15.6	14.1	14.2	
5. Detachment	Course	22	18.1	18.0	18.6	
	Control	10	18.9	18.0	18.4	
II. Ratings of Ideal Parenting Behavior						
1. Autonomy	Course	22	20.1	20.9	20.9	Time Effect (p=.01)
	Control	10	19.4	18.9	20.	Time x Group (p=.09)
2. Consistency	Course	22	20.6	19.0	18.9	Group by time
	Control	10	20.0	20.2	20.3	Int. (p=.03)
3. Non-Guilt Use	Course	22	22.4	23.0	22.9	
	Control	10	22.4	22.2	22.7	
4. Child-Centeredness	Course	22	16.9	13.6	14.2	Time Effect (p=.001)
	Control	9	17.3	14.5	16.2	
5. Detachment	Course	22	21.8	20.7	21.4	
	Control	9	22.3	22.3	22.7	

Three of the ideal ratings for the Parent's Report were also significant: autonomy, consistency, and child-centeredness. Because of the difficulty of interpreting these, particularly with the small numbers involved, these results are presented in Table D-6, but will not be discussed here.

The final measure from the Parents' Report is the discrepancy score reflecting the difference between actual and ideal ratings of behavior. The results for the three time period analysis are presented in Figure D-23. Mean ratings for the course group declined during each four month period, even after the course ended, indicating that these parents see themselves as coming progressingly closer to their ideals in these parenting skills. Discrepancy scores for the control group stay constant, or increase slightly, showing no change in their 'parenting self-concept'.

FIGURE D-23 Difference between ideal and actual ratings on the Parent's Report. (Pre, post, and delayed post tests). The group by time interaction approaches significance, p=.053.



c) The Kohn Social Competence Scale

Results for this scale are presented in Figures D-24 and D-25. There are no significant differences in Factor I scores which assess the child's cooperation with peers and use of classroom opportunities. However, there is a significant interaction in the Factor II scores. For children whose parents attended the course, teachers rate them as somewhat less responsive to rules and authority at the end of the year than at the beginning. In the control group, the same ratings improve somewhat. One possible reason for this apparently anomalous result is that children who are given more independence and control at home may also demand this in school, where it is perceived as inappropriate. This 'boomerang effect' is a fairly common initial result of introducing children to a more democratic mode of decision-making. The other possible reason is that teachers' expectations in the course group changed during the year as they gained experience with the children and improved their observation skills.

FIGURE D-24 Kohn Social Competence Scale, Factor I: Use of Classroom opportunity and peer relations. (Pre, post and delayed post-test means).

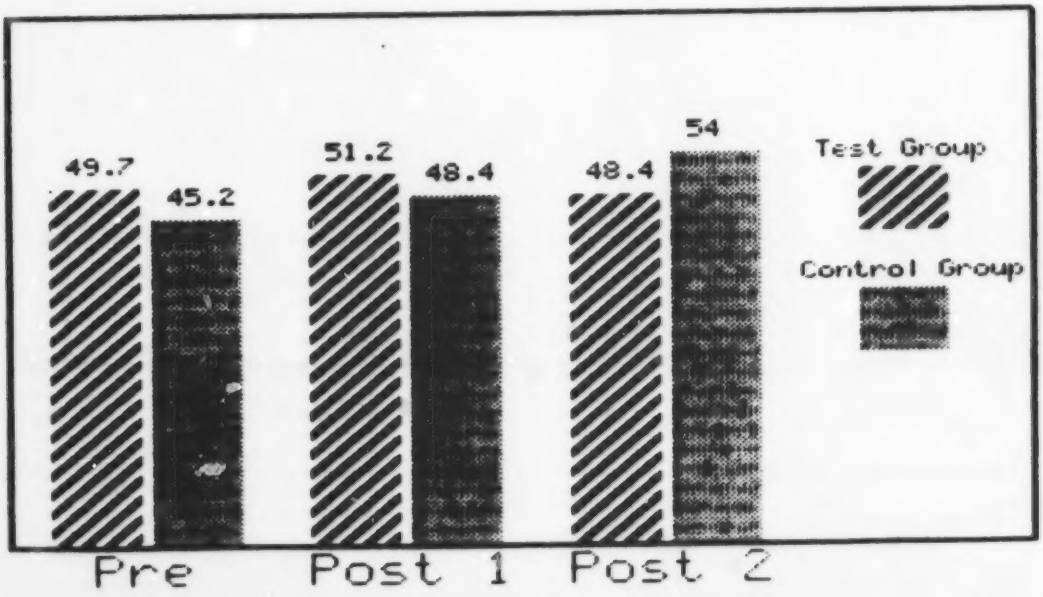
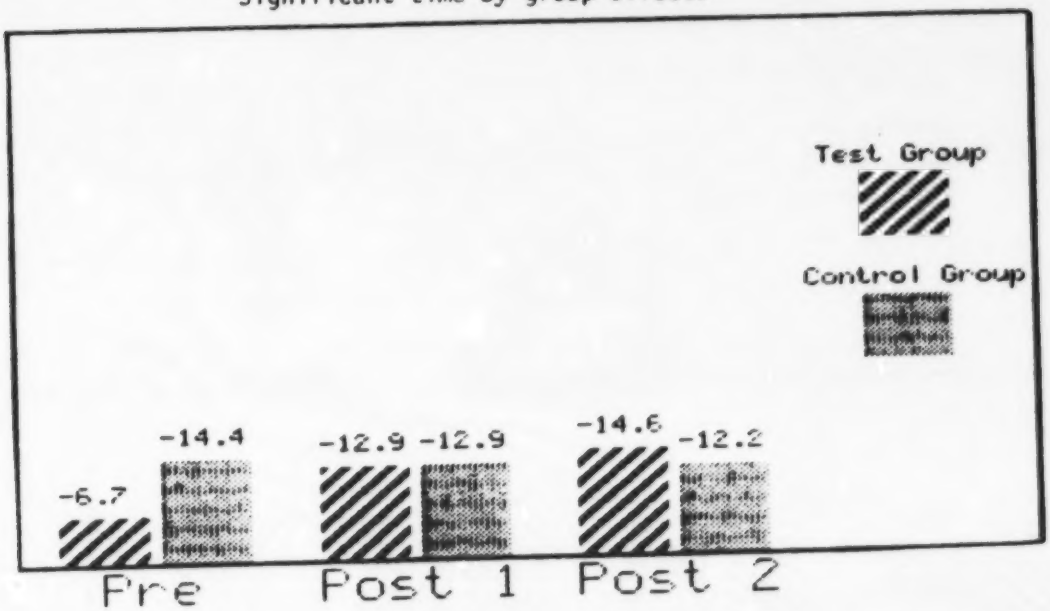


FIGURE D-25 Kohn Social Competence Scale,
Factor II: Response to authority.
(Pre, post and delayed post-test means).
Significant time by group effect.

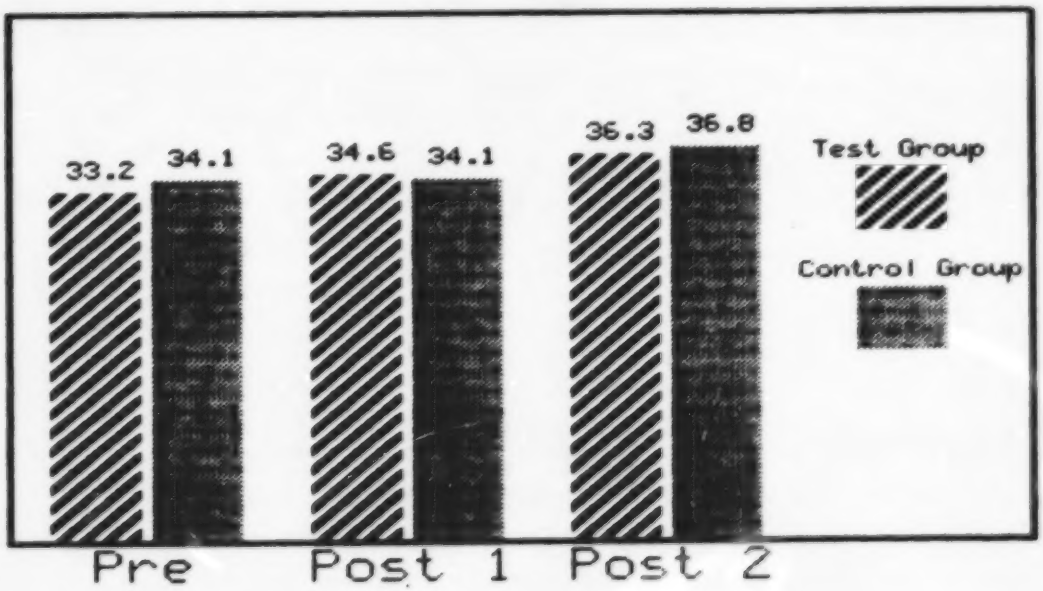


In summary, four months after the parenting course ended, gains made by course-group parents have moderated somewhat, but are generally still present. In particular, course parents see themselves as coming closer to their ideals in parenting, indicating increasing satisfaction. The strength of the statistical tests, and consequently the conclusions, is limited in the three time period analysis by the low number of subjects for whom results were available.

c). Self-Concept Test Scores

There was a significant difference in self-concept scores across time, as in the pre-post analysis. These changes, however, occur for both course and control groups, and are likely the result of increasing age and maturity rather than effects of parenting techniques. (Figure D-26).

FIGURE D-26 Purdue Self-Concept Test means for course and control groups.
(Time effect significant at p=.01).



E. CONCLUSIONS

The course appears to have had some impact on parent attitudes and reported behavior, particularly in areas stressed by the Adlerian program philosophy. On the Parent Attitude Scale, there are significant changes in the parents' feeling that their behavior has some effect on their children's behavior, in their understanding of and communication with the child, and in their trust in the child to behave appropriately without constant supervision. Also, gains in the understanding and trust dimensions appear to be maintained, at least to some extent, for four months after the end of the course.

Parents taking the course also see themselves as making gains in the amount of autonomy they give to their children to make decisions, and in reducing the use of guilt-inducing statements as a means of control. The increased level of autonomy was maintained in the delayed post-test, but the guilt-use index for these parents returned to the original level.

There were also changes in parents' ratings of child-centeredness but because of the wording of some questions, these are difficult to interpret. Changes in reports of the 'ideal' behavior of parents are also difficult to interpret, since these may represent a

change in belief about what a good parent does, or they may indicate a tendency to accept oneself as a good parent, even with occasional lapses from absolute consistency, child-centeredness, etc. What is clear, however, is that parents taking the course see less discrepancy between actual and ideal behaviors after the course than before it. This difference between the ratings is further reduced during the delayed post-test four months later. These changes may be interpreted as increases in the 'parenting self-concept, indicating a higher level of satisfaction with their parenting role.

These changes in parents correspond to emphases in the course on encouraging independence and responsibility in children, and on effective communication and discipline. It is encouraging to see that gains are maintained for at least four months, since changes in attitude such as these are frequently short-lived.

Parents themselves reported that they enjoyed the course, and that it was well-taught. On a subjective level, they saw themselves as making gains in parenting skills and in their knowledge of child development.

The evaluation of Invest in your Child's Future also looked at the kindergarten child's classroom behavior and self-concept, since these were major course goals.. There were no significant differences between course and control groups in teachers' ratings of social competence or school problems nor in self-concept scores. This is not surprising, since changes in the child can be expected to take longer than changes in the parent. Is is unrealistic to expect a major change in a child's behaviour after only four months.

After eight months, there is a significant change in one of the Social Competence scale factors. Course group children at this time are rated as less responsive to rules and authority at the end of the year than at the beginning of the course. This is perhaps a result of the increased autonomy given to children at home, which they then expect at school where it is sometimes inappropriate. This 'backlash' effect is common for children who are given more independence, until they have learned where and when such behaviors are appropriate. It would be interesting to re-test these children after a longer time interval has passed.

Generally, results of this study are similar to others evaluating Adlerian courses. There are some changes in parental attitudes and reported behavior after the course, but fewer discernible differences in the reactions of the children. Overall, parents enjoyed the course, and see themselves as having profited from it. This gain in 'parenting self-concept' may be one of the most important consequences of this type of course.

As with all research, the results of this study are constrained by the methodology, and must be interpreted in this light. Parents' attitude and behavior were assessed using self-report instruments which can be biased toward social desirability, or based on a misinterpretation. The teacher ratings, and even the self-concept test scales, are also open to this type of error. Another difficulty lies in the selection of the course and control groups. Although control parents had indicated that they would be interested in this type of course, they were not acutally required to

commit themselves to spending the time required, and thus may be different from those actually coming for two hours a week over the sixteen week period. Control parents were also predominantly Catholic, perhaps reflecting a somewhat different set of values and attitudes than course parents.

Groups were, however, remarkably similar on other demographic indicators such as age, education and work status, and were also similar on most pre-test scores. Also, members of parents in delayed post-test analyses were reduced by the low response rate, likely resulting in a somewhat select group compared to the total sample.

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